

SECOND PRIZE STORY.

(This story was awarded second prize in The Telegram's Prize Story Contest.)

THE MOTORMAN'S STORY.

BY R. N. MOFFAT.

I've no words to tell you, sir, how dearly I love that child. Why, sir, he is the only one that seems to link my life to earth, and the world seems brighter and better to me because little Jim came to live in it.

Sarah, my wife, died the same year Jim was born, and it seemed to me all the affection I had given to his mother was lavished on her child, and when I looked at him I seemed to see the laughing eye of the girl who pledged her life to me on that winter night, ten years ago, going home from the dance in the meeting-house where the folks had met to bid Joe Davis goodbye, and to wish him luck during the years he would be away from home.

I did not know that Joe had loved Sarah until long after she was my wife, and then only heard of it from the neighbors who were kind enough to tell me that Joe Davis had left home because Sarah had shown a preference for my company. Whatever Sarah saw in me to make her love me was something that not only puzzled me, but every one else who knew us both. Davis had the education and ways of a gentleman, and I—well, there wasn't a better judge of horse flesh for miles around, but at that time I couldn't read or write my own name. Davis had one of the finest farms on the Provo bench; I had five younger brothers and sisters to look after, and make a living for, and what with feeding and clothing them, I was never able to go to school.

Our parents were both dead, and sometimes it did seem as if the scourge of the Almighty was laid pretty heavily on my shoulders.

But for all that, Sarah loved me, and was not ashamed to show it, and that pure, sweet love did more for me than anything else could have done. After we were married she used to sit up at night and teach me how to spell, read and write. I learned so slowly that I sometimes felt like giving it up, but her cheery, "Try again, Hubby" (she always called me "Hubby"), seemed to make the lesson easy, and so at last I could write a pretty fair letter.

Well, things went on as usual, not much change in our simple life, until I read up my mind to go to Salt Lake City and get work, for you see we expected a stranger in our home and were not particularly well fixed for that kind of company.

To make a long story short, I was lucky and found work on the street cars, and though only a stranger there, everything seemed to turn out for my good. The boys seemed to like me, and the "old man" (God bless him), was more like a father to me than any one else I had ever known, and often when he saw me he would inquire kindly about my home. Little things which in themselves seemed trifles, all helped to cheer my life, and I don't know how I could have borne that separation from my wife without them.

One day I got a letter—oh, such a letter! I hurried to the superintendent and showed it to him, and I saw him smile as he read it, but at last he looked at me, and said: "Well, I suppose you must go, but come back when you're ready. We need such men as you."

It was not much, to be sure, but his words made me feel good.

Did you ever ride on a train going some place where you felt that the greatest blessing of all your life was waiting for you and did not notice how slowly the train seemed to move; that the rattle of the wheels scarcely seemed to be as fast as the beating of your heart, and did you wish for wings that you might soar away into space, and drop your body where your heart already was? Well, that is exactly how I felt.

But all things must have an end, and at last I arrived home. I noticed a huggy at the gate, and my wife's mother hustling around the house. I stood for a few moments before I felt able to go inside, and standing there in such a dream as heaven seldom sends to man, I heard an infant's cry. The spell was broken, and in another instant I had Sarah in my arms smothering her with kisses. Our hearts were too full for words, and in silence we returned our thanks to that wise providence who doeth all things well. Gently freeing herself from my embrace Sarah shyly turned down the bedding and

fanned lovingly at the little face by her side. I picked it up. Was it only a look of mine, or did the baby smile? I would not have changed places with any man on earth that day. I was the happiest man in Springville.

Well, after a while we got to talking of every-day matters, and then I learned that Joe Davis had come home again, and that he had been down to see Sarah; that he had helped her in different ways, and somehow I hated Joe Davis. While we were talking about him, he came in, and asked to see the baby. The demon of jealousy had got possession of me, and I could not return the honest, manly grip he gave me. Joe noticed the difference, and did not stay long, and somehow after he left the house I felt as if I could not be the same man again.

In a few days Sarah began to move around, and I began to get ready to go back to work. I had forgotten all about Davis, and we were talking happily of the home we would soon have in the city, for you see we intended to move to town, and had made many bright plans for the future. We were sitting alone the night before I left home. Then it was I told her to be careful and not do too much work and she laughingly replied: "Have no fear for me, Hubby. When I find anything too hard for me, I'll send for Joe Davis." Joe Davis! How the name hurt me. It seemed as if I had received a blow that shattered my every hope. I was angry in an instant, and could not help showing it. "Sarah, no matter what happens, I want you to leave Joe Davis alone. We don't want any help from him."

She felt the doubt my words implied, and I saw a look of horror come into her eyes. I saw her lip tremble, but she answered gently: "Very well, Hubby, don't be cross." But little else passed between us that night. I lay awake, a prey to my jealous fears. She, thinking I had gone to sleep, sat up in bed and kissed me. I feigned to be asleep, and felt and saw her tears fall in silence. Strange that jealousy should so benumb the feelings of the heart, and constrain one to deny to himself the boon he is so eager to possess.

By morning I had gained control of myself, and there was no lack of fervor in the kisses with which we parted, and even now, after many years, I can hear her say: "Trust me, Jim, I love you." As I saw her there, our baby in her arms, waving her hand at me, my heart smote me, and I resolved that never again would I give way to that horrible feeling.

How happy I was when I rented that little house on the hill, near the brewery (you see my run was to Fort Douglas), and I thought of how often I would see her and baby watching at the window for my car to pass.

One day when I had just run in one of the boys came to me (I don't remember who it was), and placing his hand on my arm, said: "Jim, old man, be brave." Instantly I felt there was something wrong. A nameless dread seemed to overcome me. I clutched him by the shoulders and whispered: "Tell me—tell me all." "Jim, be brave. Oh, Jim, your wife is dead." I repeated the words, "My wife is dead." God! It was true. She died believing in my distrust. Died, and I was not near her. Died before they could send me word, and I—my heart seemed dead that day.

I pass over a few years, the misery of which I can never forget. I had brought my sister to the city to keep house for me, and care for little Jim. I used to watch the house every time I passed in hopes of seeing him wave his hand from the window, for it seemed to comfort me. In every look, in every act, I saw the reflection of his mother.

One wintry day, when Jim was about 4 years old, I was "in front." I tell you at the best of times a motorman has to be on the lookout, especially on the hill between the fort and the city. A wet, sleety snow had been falling, and it was hard for us to make our way down the hill, the wheels slipping and turning in a way to provoke any man, but at last we reached the fort. As we started back we came down with brakes half set, and we were going pretty lively, too, but the worst part of the grade lies between the cemetery and Fourth South. Well, just as I left the cemetery I found it necessary to set the brakes a little tighter, and being busy I looked back at the conductor making some remark about the way we were traveling. I saw him point wildly ahead, a look of horror on his face. I turned and saw a child running up the track, toward the car. I set the brakes with the strength of a madman. The car seemed to shoot over the rails as if hurled by some devilish power. "Oh, God," I cried, "be merciful to me! If one must die, let it be me." I knew it was little Jim. Wild with despair I prepared to jump in front of the car, hoping in some way to save my child, or die with him, when I saw a man running toward the track. Will he save him? "Oh, God," I prayed, "help me—help him." Then I fainted dead away.

When I recovered my senses the conductor and others were standing around. At last my eye rested on the man who held little Jim in his arms. I staggered toward him, clasped my treasure to my heart and turned to thank the savior of my life. He held out his hand to me, and in a voice filled with emotion said: "Please don't thank me, Jim." It was Joe Davis.